



Nurse Qualification Standard

1999

Fact Sheet

What are the new Nurse Qualification Standards?

The new standards are much more comprehensive than the ones they replace. The new standards require VA nurses to demonstrate how they are improving clinical practice and contributing to better health care delivery systems overall. The new standards enable nurses to show that they are anticipating trends in healthcare and are committed to lifelong professional growth and learning.

How will this impact VA nurses?

- The VA will continue to hire Diploma and Associate Degree nurses at the Nurse I Grade.
- All new hires will have to have a BSN to be appointed at Nurse II or a MS to be appointed at Nurse III.
- The Standards include a provision for current nurses, which states that no nurse would lose grade or step progression within the current grade due to the revised standards.
- There will be a transition period (until October 1, 2005) for current nurses during which time they can be promoted to Nurse II without a BSN and to Nurse III without an MS/MA.
- The Nurse Professional Standards Boards may also recommend and the approving official authorize a waiver of experience and/or degree requirements for individuals whose professional accomplishments, performance qualifications warrant such consideration, based on demonstrated ability to meet the requirements for promotion to the next higher grade, or advancement to a higher level within the grade.
- If a waiver of education requirements above Nurse III level is recommended, the recommendation will be forwarded through the approving official who will forward to the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Nurse Professional Standards Board (NPSB) or Headquarters NPSB as appropriate.

How long do I have to attain a degree?

Current VA employees have until the year 2005 before the educational requirements for Nurse II and Nurse III are implemented.

How will VA support efforts by nurses to obtain the required degrees?

- The VA has signed an agreement with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing committing both organizations to seek increased opportunities to bring innovative educational programs to settings that are convenient for VA nurses. The agreement establishes the first of what is anticipated to be a number of partnerships to help VA nurses advance themselves educationally and professionally.
- Efforts are under way to find ways of helping staff access educational resources such as satellite education, distance learning, on-site classes and other non-traditional educational programs.

What happens if I decide not to go back to school?

- You don't have to go back to school to maintain and advance within your grade.
- During the transition, you can still be promoted without having to meet the new educational requirement.
- After the transition, you may still be eligible for promotion by waiver.

What about financial assistance for nurses choosing to return to school?

Funds have been obligated to assist nurses choosing to return to school. Information regarding this program is available from your Medical Center Education Department.